



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
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**Gianni
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Commission work programme 2015

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Thursday 15 January 2015

Europe is facing a long period of low growth, high unemployment (twenty-five million Europeans, including five million young people), rising inequalities and a real risk of deflation if the economy is not stimulated by a strong investment plan and courageous monetary policies. What's needed: a major increase in public investment; stronger unconventional monetary policies; wage increases in countries with high surpluses; and most of all active governments driven by a socially and environmentally sustainable development plan.

The European Commission must make tax evasion a top priority and come up with wide-ranging and effective proposals against tax havens and tax avoidance in the first six months of 2015. In the light of recent tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea we also need a real European migration policy based on solidarity among Member States. Finally, we do not agree with the Commission's intention of withdrawing a number of key legislative proposals, notably the air quality package, the waste package and the circular economy packages as well as the maternity leave directive.



**Kati
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Freedom of expression in Turkey

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Thursday 15 January 2015

The S&D expresses concern over the backsliding in democratic reforms in Turkey, in particular, the government's diminishing tolerance of public protests and critical media. The recent police raids and the detention of a number of journalists are very troubling developments. We recall that the freedom of speech and media pluralism are at the heart of European values and that an independent press is crucial to a democratic society, as it enables citizens to take an active part in the collective decision-making processes on an informed basis and therefore strengthens democracy. The recent developments curtailing the freedom of media and expression highlight the need for a stronger engagement between Turkey and the European Union, particularly on the rule of law and fundamental rights reforms.



**Knut
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Situation in Ukraine

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The European Union will continue to support the new government's efforts to build a new Ukraine.

The most effective defence for Ukrainian sovereignty and independence is to rapidly implement reforms in order to obtain a reliable and impartial judicial system, the rule of law, the eradication of corruption, decentralisation, media freedom and minority rights. Ukrainian citizens are waiting for those reforms.

The S&D group wants to push aside the legitimate criticism towards Russia, to primarily focus its attention on the alarming humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine and the need for a reconciliation that should go hand-in-hand with the full implementation of the Minsk arrangements and the efforts to work out a sustainable peace settlement.



**Linda
McAvan**

Launch of the European Year for Development

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2015 is a vital year for international development policy. As we reach the target date for achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), work is now underway to agree on a new global development framework at the United Nations in September. The European Year for Development is a great opportunity to galvanise support for a strong new framework amongst European citizens. We want the Year to show that development policy works, that it has concrete effects in improving the lives of millions, but that there is still more to be done. The European Union must play a leading role in these efforts, in partnership with other countries, international organisations and civil society.



Gianni Pittella

Programme of activities of the Latvian Presidency

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Wednesday 14 January 2015

The core objective of the upcoming Latvian Presidency of the European Union will be growth, a goal that we share and fully support. However, as already underlined by German, French and Italian ministers of economy, part of the economic recovery is due to the fight against tax havens and tax evasion. The Socialists and Democrats would like the upcoming Latvian Presidency to strongly commit to this. We want unfair tax competition between member states to finally be tackled by working towards a greater European harmonisation. And with regard to this, we have already proposed some concrete measures to deal with such a sensitive issue. The European Union must ensure that no European funding is granted to any company involved in tax fraud. Multinational companies must be obliged to pay taxes where they make their profit.



Ana Gomes

Situation in Libya

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Tuesday 13 January 2015

Today, Libya is at the brink of chaos with a proxy war being fought on its territory at the expense of its people. Furthermore, the country is at the mercy of terrorists and other criminal groups serving foreign powers' interests. The resolution that the European Parliament is going to vote this week must state that all European and international efforts in Libya should be internationally articulated under the aegis of the United Nations, whose Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Bernardino León, is playing a key role in brokering talks between opposing Libyan factions in the search for a Libyan-made political solution. The House of Representatives, now forced to sit in Tobruk, must be seen as the only legitimate legislative institution since it has won the democratic election in June 2014, the results of which were not disputed. The S&D group should call on the European Union to get its act together, to react in a European fashion and fully support the United Nations' SRSG in seeking a negotiated solution leading up to the formation of a united and inclusive government in Libya, namely by implementing targeted sanctions to all spoilers of the political process and perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses. The European Union should also make it clear that Libya's lawlessness, widespread armed violence and state collapse are a real danger for the entire region and, therefore, for Europe as well, including its environmental safety and overall security.



Victor Bostinaru

Situation in Egypt

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The 2013 military takeover and the newly elected President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have not brought the change that the people have been fighting for in Egypt. The country continues to play a key role in the regional context, as demonstrated by the mediation of the ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians after the Gaza summer war, but the internal situation is characterized by abuses against political opponents, protestors, freedom of expression, and by a worrying use of military courts against civilians. The S&D Group calls for an end to the human rights abuses, for the respect of the new Constitution, for the restoration of political pluralism and for parliamentary elections which have been postponed.



Birgit Sippel

Recent human smuggling incidents in the Mediterranean

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Without legal and safe entry channels for migrants, many refugees end up in the hands of smugglers or human traffickers, their only way to get to the European Union. Following a new series of tragic incidents in the Mediterranean, there will be a special debate in plenary next Tuesday.

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